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The Syrian Refugee Crisis: A Comparison of Responses by Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States

Nicole Ostrand¹

Executive Summary

The conflict in Syria between the government of Bashar al-Assad and various other forces, which started in the spring of 2011, continues to cause displacement within the country and across the region. By the end of 2014, an estimated 7.6 million people were internally displaced and 3.7 million Syrians had fled the country since the conflict began (OCHA 2014; UNHCR 2015a). The refugee situation caused by the Syrian conflict is dire, and it has placed enormous strain on neighboring countries. Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, and Turkey host massive numbers of Syrian refugees, and Syrians have been seeking protection beyond these countries in increasing numbers since 2011.

This paper looks at the burdens and costs of the Syrian refugee crisis and considers how they have, or have not, been shared by the international community at large, and in particular by Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. It also considers to what degree Syrians have been able to find protection in states outside the region. Germany and Sweden, by the end of 2014, had provided protection to the largest number of Syrian refugees outside the region. Although Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States differ in the level of protection provided to Syrians, all four states have increased protection to Syrians via resettlement and asylum (and in the case of the US temporary protected status) since 2012. Despite this, the degree of protection provided by the four states is modest in relation to that provided by neighboring countries to Syria, and far more could be done. This paper also argues that the international community as a whole has not sufficiently contributed toward alleviating the burden caused by the Syrian refugee influx, in terms of both financial assistance and refugee resettlement.

¹ Nicole Ostrand graduated with a master's degree in human rights from Mahidol University, Thailand in 2013. She will begin her tenure as a doctoral student in migration studies at the University of Sussex in September 2015.

The paper puts forward two general recommendations to reduce the strain on neighboring countries: increase the level of burden sharing by the international community as a whole and more evenly distribute the burden among industrialized states in Europe, North America, and the Asia Pacific. In terms of enhancing the level of protection for Syrians in countries beyond the region, it proposes three recommendations for states: namely, increase refugee resettlement, facilitate family reunification and other forms of legal admission, and allow refugees to seek protection through embassies in the region.

Introduction

The conflict in Syria between the government of Bashar al-Assad and various other forces, which started in the spring of 2011, continues to cause displacement within the country and across the region. By the end of 2014, an estimated 7.6 million people were internally displaced and 3.7 million Syrians had fled the country since the conflict began (OCHA 2014; UNHCR 2015a). During 2014, more than one million Syrians were newly registered as refugees in neighboring countries, bringing the total number of registered refugees in the region to 3,688,402 by year-end (UNHCR 2014a; UNHCR 2015a).² As large as the number of newly registered refugees is, in a sense it underestimates the current crisis as it excludes the 117,590 Syrians who were awaiting registration at the end of 2014 (UNHCR 2015a), and *de facto* Syrian refugees who were residing in the region but who were not formally registered or awaiting registration.³

The Syrian conflict has placed enormous strain on its neighboring countries, with Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey shouldering the largest burden. By the end of 2014, Lebanon, a country of approximately 4.8 million people before the onset of the Syrian refugee crisis, hosted 1,146,405 registered Syrian refugees, meaning that nearly one in every five people now living in Lebanon is a Syrian refugee (UNHCR 2015a). As of December 31, 2014, Turkey hosted the largest Syrian population, with 1,552,839 registered refugees; Jordan housed the third largest population with 622,865 registered refugees (*ibid.*). In comparison, Iraq and Egypt accommodated a smaller yet substantial number of Syrians, hosting 228,484 and 137,812 registered refugees, respectively (*ibid.*).

María Eugenia Casar, under secretary general and associate administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has reported that “countries hosting Syrian refugees are struggling with the massive impact on their economies, societies, and infrastructure threatening not only their stability but the stability of the entire region” (cited in UNHCR 2014b). The scope and protracted nature of the Syrian conflict has made

2 On January 1, 2014, there were 2,301,533 registered Syrian refugees (UNHCR 2014a). Estimates include 24,055 Syrian refugees registered in North Africa (UNHCR 2015a).

3 The number of newly registered Syrian refugees also excludes refugees who are not Syrian nationals but who were residing as refugees in Syria prior to the conflict and who have fled due to the fighting. Such populations include Palestinian and Iraqi refugees. For example, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees estimates that 65,000 Palestinian refugees have left Syria and are now residing in Lebanon, Jordan, Gaza, and Egypt (UNRWA 2015). Similarly, early reports had estimated that “more than 50,000 Iraqi refugees” living in Syria returned to Iraq (see <http://www.unhcr.org/51c0399c9.html>).

the situation for Syrian refugees and their host communities exceedingly difficult. Syrian refugees face tension among host community populations and struggle to secure basic needs like security, food, and shelter (Orhan 2014). With the humanitarian situation caused by the Syrian conflict continuing to deteriorate, Syrians are increasingly seeking asylum in states outside the region.

In 2013, Syria became for the first time the main country of origin of asylum seekers in 44 industrialized countries in Europe, North America, and the Asia Pacific region (UNHCR 2014d).⁴ An estimated 56,400 Syrians requested refugee status in the 44 industrialized countries in 2013, more than double the number of Syrian asylum claims in 2012 (25,200) and six times the number in 2011 (8,500) (ibid.). In 2014, the number of Syrian asylum seekers in the 44 industrialized countries reached 149,600, the highest number recorded by a single group since 1992 (UNHCR 2015h).⁵

The refugee situation caused by the Syrian conflict is dire. Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, and Turkey host massive numbers of Syrian refugees, and Syrians are increasingly seeking protection outside these countries as well. This paper looks at the burdens and costs of the Syrian refugee crisis and considers how they have, or have not, been shared by the international community at large, and in particular by Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

These four states were chosen as a focal point because they accommodate relatively large numbers of asylum seekers annually and enjoy a positive reputation for providing refuge to those in need in times of crisis.⁶ According to UNHCR's annual asylum trends reports of 44 industrialized states, between 2009 and 2013, Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States ranked among the top five states receiving asylum claims (UNHCR 2014d, 13).⁷ Each country has also demonstrated a significant commitment to alleviating the Syrian refugee crisis. The United States and the United Kingdom are the

4 The 44 countries are the 28 member states of the European Union (EU), Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Turkey, as well as Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, and the United States (UNHCR 2014d, 5). Note: even though Turkey is included in the 44 countries, the vast majority of Syrians who are registered in the country (and who are covered by the Turkish government's temporary protection regime) are not included in UNHCR's estimates of asylum seekers in the country. The Syrian asylum seekers included in UNHCR's estimates cover only those "who for specific reasons have been referred to UNHCR for further evaluation of their international protection needs" (UNHCR 2015h, 21).

5 In 1992, 223,000 people originating from Serbia and Montenegro lodged asylum claims in the 44 industrialized countries included in UNHCR's annual asylum trends reports (UNHCR 2015h).

6 For instance, the United States is well-known for being the world's top refugee resettlement country and generally resettles at least 50 percent of all refugees referred by UNHCR annually worldwide (see, e.g., UNHCR 2015c and US PRM 2014). In 2014 the British deputy prime minister, Nick Clegg, said: "...[w]e are *one of the most open-hearted countries in the world* and I believe we have a moral responsibility to help... Britain has a long and *proud tradition of providing refuge* at times of crisis" (cited in Wintour 2014, emphasis added). Sweden has a reputation for being particularly open and receptive toward Syrian refugees (see, e.g., Brennen 2013; Evans 2014; and Rothschild 2014). Germany views the fundamental right of asylum as a high priority that expresses the country's willingness to fulfill its historical and humanitarian obligation to admit refugees (German Federal Ministry of the Interior 2014a).

7 The United States had the most asylum claims submitted during this period, followed by Germany. Sweden and the United Kingdom received the fourth and fifth largest number of asylum claims. France, which ranked third, is not considered in this report due to the minimal number of Syrian asylum claims made in the country in 2012, 2013, and 2014.

largest single-state bilateral donors of humanitarian aid for the Syrian crisis (Pierce 2014), and Germany and Sweden have admitted the largest number of Syrian refugees among industrialized states outside the region.⁸ Through a comparison of these four countries, this paper illustrates how some industrialized states have responded to the Syrian refugee influx and draws attention to differences and similarities in their responses.

After comparing the contributions and responses of industrialized states to each other and to the contributions and responses of Syria's neighboring states, this paper puts forward two types of recommendations. First, to reduce the strain on neighboring countries, it recommends increasing the level of burden sharing by the international community as a whole as well as increasing the distribution of this burden among industrialized states. Second, to enhance the level of protection available for Syrians in states beyond the region, this paper recommends that states: (1) increase refugee resettlement; (2) allow refugees to seek protection through embassies in the region; and (3) facilitate family reunification and other legal avenues for admission, such as private sponsorship, medical evacuation, humanitarian visas, academic scholarships, and labor mobility schemes.

I. Asylum, Refugee Resettlement, and Temporary Protection

There are two primary avenues for Syrians to access protection in industrialized states beyond the region: (1) traveling (legally or illegally) to a state and claiming asylum there, or (2) being recognized as a refugee for resettlement selection from a country of first asylum. These avenues are complementary, and the main difference is the location of the person at the time of application. Refugee determinations and resettlement decisions are made while the person is outside the destination country (UNHCR 2011, 3).⁹ In contrast, a person seeking asylum submits an application while they are physically present in or at a port of entry in the territory where they are requesting refuge.¹⁰

No country is legally obliged to resettle refugees, and only a few states offer resettlement on a regular basis (UNHCR 2011). Less than 1 percent of the world's refugees are resettled to a third country (UNHCR 2015c). Asylum is a form of protection based on the principle of *non-refoulement* and internationally or nationally recognized refugee rights (Eurostat

8 See analysis below for the number of Syrians provided protection in Germany and Sweden compared to the United States and United Kingdom. See Bitoulas 2013, 2014, and 2015 for the number of Syrians provided asylum in Germany and Sweden compared to other EU member states. Additionally, Canada and Australia have only offered resettlement and other forms of admission to around 11,000 and 5,600 Syrians, respectively (UNHCR 2015b), and they have received a very small number of Syrian asylum seekers (see UNHCR 2014d).

9 UNHCR defines refugee resettlement as "the selection and transfer of refugees from a [s]tate in which they have sought protection to a third [s]tate which has agreed to admit them, as refugees, for permanent resettlement" (UNHCR 2011, 3). The status and rights given to resettled refugees vary depending on the country, and some states (e.g., Germany) initially grant temporary residence with the possibility to receive permanent residence after a specified length of time.

10 EU Directive 2013/32/EU, article 3; US Immigration and Nationality Act (US INA), section 101(a)(42)(A) and section 208(b).

2014a). States have an obligation to provide protection. A positive asylum decision can lead to refugee status¹¹ (referred to as asylum in the United States), subsidiary protection status,¹² or withholding of removal.¹³

Temporary protection, which grants the right to enter or remain in a country for a limited time due to risk of serious harm in a person's home country, is another possible means for providing protection.¹⁴ It is usually granted to large groups of people based on extraordinary and temporary conditions in their country of origin (Miller and Orchard 2014). Temporary protection is not intended to displace asylum, but rather to provide an intermediary, immediate measure of protection, and persons granted temporary protection should be able to apply for and be granted asylum if eligible (Kerwin 2014).¹⁵

In the EU, temporary protection generally refers to a procedure to provide, "in the event of a mass influx or imminent mass influx," immediate and temporary protection to persons fleeing their country who are unable to return home (European Commission 2015b).¹⁶ Since 2001, the EU has had a regional temporary protection mechanism which is triggered by the adoption of a decision by the Council of the European Union (following a recommendation by the European Commission) establishing a mass influx of displaced persons and stating the groups of persons to whom the protection applies.¹⁷ In the United States, temporary

11 EU Directive 2011/95/EU, article 2(e); US INA, section 101(a)(42)(A), section 208(a), and section 208(b).

12 EU Directive 2011/95/EU, article 2(g). In the EU, subsidiary protection status is granted to a third country national (or a stateless person) who does not qualify as a refugee but for whom substantial grounds have been shown for believing that the person concerned, if returned to his or her country of origin, would face a real risk of suffering serious harm. A positive asylum decision in the EU can also grant authorization to stay for humanitarian reasons. This includes individuals who are not eligible for refugee or subsidiary protection, but are nonetheless protected against removal under obligations imposed on all EU member states by international refugee or human rights law. Examples of such categories are persons who are not removable on ill health grounds and unaccompanied minors (Bitoulas 2014, 24). No Syrians were granted authorization to stay for humanitarian reasons by Germany, Sweden, or the United Kingdom in 2013 through 2014 (see Bitoulas 2014 and Bitoulas 2015).

13 US INA, section 241(b)(3) and section 241(c). Withholding of removal is a form of protection in the United States that is considered once an asylum seeker is determined not to meet the refugee definition. It is granted to individuals who show that they would either be tortured or they would face persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion if returned to their country of origin. In the United States, withholding applicants face higher standards of proof than asylum seekers (Kerwin 2012).

14 EU Directive 2001/55/EC; US INA, section 244(b)(1). For more on temporary protection in general, see Edwards 2012.

15 See also EU Directive 2001/55/EC, paragraph 10 and articles 4 and 19.

16 See also the Council of the European Union directive on minimum standards for giving temporary protection (EU Directive 2001/55/EC).

17 EU Directive 2001/55/EC. It should be noted that there are other forms of temporary protection and some EU member states, in addition to being part of the regional temporary protection regime, offer distinct forms of temporary protection at the national level. For example, Germany and the United Kingdom technically grant temporary protection for Syrians admitted through their resettlement programs. However, this is not discussed in the section on temporary protection because it is covered in the resettlement portion of the paper. In the United Kingdom, Syrians receive temporary residency for five years; following this period, individuals may apply for permanent settlement (UK Home Office 2013; UK Home Office 2014a). Syrians admitted under Germany's resettlement program receive two-year, potentially renewable residence permits (Miller and Orchard 2014). Additionally, Syrians granted asylum in Germany (both subsidiary and refugee status) receive a three-year residency permit, after which they are granted permanent residency provided that they

protection is often associated with temporary protected status, which offers group protection to non-citizens in the United States from designated countries.¹⁸ Temporary protected status is not necessarily a response to a mass influx, but is granted to individuals of designated states when an armed conflict, a natural disaster, or other extraordinary and temporary conditions prevent them from returning.¹⁹

II. Limitations

Comparing refugee and asylum numbers across states can be challenging because states have different laws, systems, and procedures for admitting refugees.²⁰ Also, the information available varies by state and there is inconsistency in definitions and terms. There are three important limitations pertinent to the evaluation of Syrian refugees across Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

First, there is a disparity in how the number of submitted asylum applications is calculated by states. Statistics on asylum applications in Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom refer to the number of individuals applying for asylum, irrespective of the type of procedure in which the application was lodged (Eurostat 2014b). In the United States, data on asylum applications are broken down by type: *affirmative* and *defensive*. Affirmative claims refer to applications by persons who are not in removal proceedings and who come forward affirmatively to request protection. Defensive claims, on the other hand, are submitted for the first time as a defense to removal by persons who are in removal proceedings (Kerwin 2012). Information on affirmative claims are reported by the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and refer to the number of *cases*, which may include several individuals from the same family. In contrast, statistics on defensive applications are reported by the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) and count the number of individuals.

As a result of differences in the way US asylum applications are reported, it is difficult to establish the actual number of Syrians requesting asylum annually (including both affirmative and defensive claims). This makes it challenging to compare the United States with Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. According to UNHCR, on average one affirmative asylum case in the United States involves 1.356 individuals (UNHCR 2014d,

do not meet the conditions for revocation or withdrawal (German Residence Act, section 26[1] and 26[3]).

18 The United States also has other mechanisms that can offer temporary protection. For example, the Department of Homeland Security can use “parole” to grant entry to non-citizens, who would otherwise be inadmissible, based on a “compelling emergency” or “urgent humanitarian” reason (USCIS 2014b; US INA 212(d)(5)(A)). For more on temporary protection programs in the United States see Kerwin 2014.

19 US INA, section 244(b)(1). For more on temporary protected status in the United States, see Bergeron 2014.

20 As members of the EU, Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, in theory, have a more harmonized system of procedures and legislation on asylum. Since 1999, EU member states have worked to establish a Common European Asylum System, or a set of common asylum policies and standards at the EU level. (It should be noted that the United Kingdom is not fully part of the Common European Asylum System. For more information, see Costello and Hancox 2014, 4-5). This system is intended to bring unified standards and to strengthen practical cooperation between member states. It consists of several directives and regulations that detail the responsibilities of EU member states in receiving asylum seekers, processing their claims, and providing protection.

5). To produce an estimate of the number of individuals who submitted asylum applications in the United States, this paper will therefore multiply by 1.356 the reported number of US affirmative applications and add to that product the number of defensive asylum applications submitted annually.

A second limitation relates to who is included in statistics on individuals granted asylum in each state. In the EU, a person granted asylum (referred to as a recipient of international protection), means an individual who has received refugee or subsidiary protection status (Bitoulas 2015, 23).²¹ Subsidiary protection (known as humanitarian protection in the United Kingdom) is provided to a person who does not qualify as a refugee but for whom there are substantial grounds to believe they would face a risk of serious harm if returned to his or her country of origin.²² Throughout this paper, a Syrian granted asylum in Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom refers to a recipient of international protection²³ and includes those who have received refugee or subsidiary protection status.

In the United States, a person granted asylum (an asylee) generally refers to persons who received protection based on the refugee standard and does not include related forms of protection such as withholding of removal (Martin and Yankay 2014).²⁴ Withholding of removal claims are considered after an individual has been denied asylum. Withholding is granted to individuals who show that they would either be tortured if returned to his or her country of origin or “it is more likely than not” that they would face persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.²⁵

Due to the limitations of available information, data relating to Syrians granted asylum in the United States includes only individuals who received protection based on the refugee standard. While statistics are available on the number of individuals granted withholding of removal under the US Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) and under the UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), they do not distinguish individuals granted this status by nationality. However, because the number of withholding grants annually is small in comparison to the number of asylum grants, it is assumed the absence of withholding statistics for Syrian nationals will not make a substantial difference in the overall picture of Syrians provided protection in the United States.²⁶

21 EU Directive 2011/95/EU, article 2(b).

22 For subsidiary protection status see EU Directive 2011/95/EU, article 2(g); for refugee status see EU Directive 2011/95/EU, article 2(e). Humanitarian protection is UK’s equivalent to subsidiary protection (European Database of Asylum Law 2015).

23 This paper uses the meaning of “international protection” as defined in the 2011 EU directive on the standards for qualification of beneficiaries of international protection. See EU Directive 2011/95/EU, article 2(b).

24 To be eligible for asylum status, an applicant must meet the definition of a refugee set forth in US INA, section 101(a)(42); see also US INA, section 208.

25 US INA, section 241(b)(3) and section 241(c).

26 For example, in FY 2013, 25,199 individuals received asylum in the United States (15,266 were granted asylum by the USCIS Asylum Office and 9,933 were granted asylum by immigration courts) compared to 1,893 individuals who were granted withholding of removal (1,518 who received withholding under US INA, section 241(b)(3) and 375 who received withholding under CAT). See EOIR 2014, K5 and M1; Martin and Yankay 2014, table 6.

The last limitation concerns the time period states use for reporting statistics. Statistics on the number of asylum applications and individuals granted asylum in the United States are based on its fiscal year (October 1 through September 30) while statistics from the three European countries are based on the calendar year. This and the other limitations discussed make some of the numbers in this paper approximate but nonetheless sufficient to show trends across the four states.

III. The Syrian Refugee Crisis in Neighboring Countries

The neighboring countries of Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt have provided valuable protection to Syrian refugees since the conflict began in 2011. They have generally allowed Syrians access to their territories and have dedicated significant financial resources and social services to help them.²⁷ For example, Turkey, by the start of December 2014, had invested USD 4.5 billion in direct assistance to Syrian refugees in their country (Guterres 2014). As of mid-2014, Jordan and Lebanon had spent more than USD 1.2 billion and USD 1.6 billion, respectively (UNDP 2014, 11). The central Iraqi government and regional Kurdistan government also contributed to the Syrian refugee response by providing core relief items, cash assistance, and essential services (such as free access to health care) (UNHCR 2015f). The burden placed on these countries is immense and has had adverse social and economic costs on the host communities.

More than 80 percent of registered Syrian refugees in neighboring countries live in communities and cities rather than designated refugee camps. The influx of large numbers of refugees to urban settings has dramatically shifted the demographic composition in some areas and strained basic social services like water, sanitation, food, health care, housing, and electricity (UNDP 2014, 8). A 2014 United Nations Development Program (UNDP) report described the refugee influx as a large-scale “*de facto* acceleration of urban growth” which has not been matched by increases in housing, service provision, infrastructure, and market capacity adequate to meet the requirements of the increased population (*ibid.*, 8). The areas and communities that were already among the poorest prior to the crisis (*i.e.*, the northern region in Jordan and in Lebanon along the Syrian border) have been particularly hard hit. They have had to absorb some of the largest numbers of refugees, yet have less resources and wealth than towns and cities located farther away from the Syrian border (*ibid.*).

In Lebanon, a country with major development challenges that pre-dated the Syrian refugee crisis, the impact has been particularly devastating. Lebanon now has the highest per capita rate of refugees worldwide (Inter-Agency 2015a). Since the start of the Syrian conflict in March 2011, the number of people residing in the country has increased by nearly 25 percent, and the people living under poverty has risen by nearly two-thirds (Government of Lebanon and OCHA 2014). Public institutions struggle to cope with the added volume of demands for their services. Lebanese national health, education, and infrastructure services are overstretched, and in some areas demand for electricity, water, and waste collection far surpass the capacity to meet the needs (*ibid.*).

27 Recently, Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt have started to manage their borders in a more restrictive manner by introducing visa requirements for Syrians, who were previously exempt from this regulation (Ayoub and Khallaf 2014; ECHO 2014; USAID 2014).

For Syrian refugees in Lebanon, shelter is a serious concern due to the absence of formal refugee camps and the lack of affordable housing (Government of Lebanon and OCHA 2014, 85). At the end of 2014, 55 percent of the 1,146,405 registered Syrian refugees lived in substandard shelter, mainly in informal settlements, garages, worksites, or unfinished buildings (*ibid.*). The number of house evictions and dismantling of informal refugee settlements has also increased, and an estimated 29 percent of Syrians were unable to meet their basic needs (ECHO 2015; Government of Lebanon and OCHA 2014).

The situation in Jordan is also dire. In 2014, 84 percent of the 622,865 registered Syrian refugees lived in urban and rural areas across the country rather than in official refugee camps (UNHCR 2014e). Around two-thirds of the population outside camps in 2014 lived below the Jordanian absolute poverty line (USD 96 per month), and one-sixth were below the abject poverty line (USD 40 per month) (*ibid.*). Among the Syrian households outside camps, 46 percent were without heating and two-fifths had poor sanitary conditions (*ibid.*).

In Turkey, tension has been rising in cities and towns bordering Syria due to the growing Syrian population, which reached 1,552,839 registered refugees at the end of 2014 (Amnesty International 2014; UNHCR 2014a). More than 70 percent of these refugees lived outside of government run refugee camps, often in overcrowded rental houses (Inter-Agency 2014a). Though camp settings provide basic services, many Syrians outside of camps struggle to secure basic needs like housing, health care, and education, and some live in abject poverty, often in unsanitary, even dangerous housing conditions (Amnesty International 2014).

For Syrian refugees in Iraq and Egypt, changes in the security and political landscape in each country have negatively impacted the refugees' living conditions. As the armed conflicts in Syria and Iraq have intensified and become intertwined, the situation for Syrians in Iraq has deteriorated (Inter-Agency 2014b). In particular, humanitarian agencies reported a deterioration of asylum space in 2013 in the Kurdistan region, especially in the Erbil governorate where the authorities temporarily discontinued assistance and issuance of residency permits to refugees in October 2013 (*ibid.*).²⁸ Although assistance and issuance of residency permits was reinstituted in 2014, the security situation remains tense in the central and northern region (Inter-Agency 2015b). On top of the 228,484 registered Syrian refugees, two million Iraqis were internally displaced by violence in 2014 alone, overloading the resources of host communities who accommodated both refugee and internally displaced populations (UNHCR 2015f).²⁹

In Egypt, despite the government's initial commitments to provide refugees with access to public health and education on equal footing with Egyptians, the protection available for Syrians has decreased due to a change in the political environment (Inter-Agency 2014c). In July 2013, the Egyptian government altered its policy and introduced visa requirements for Syrians, who had previously been exempt from this regulation (Inter-Agency 2014c).³⁰

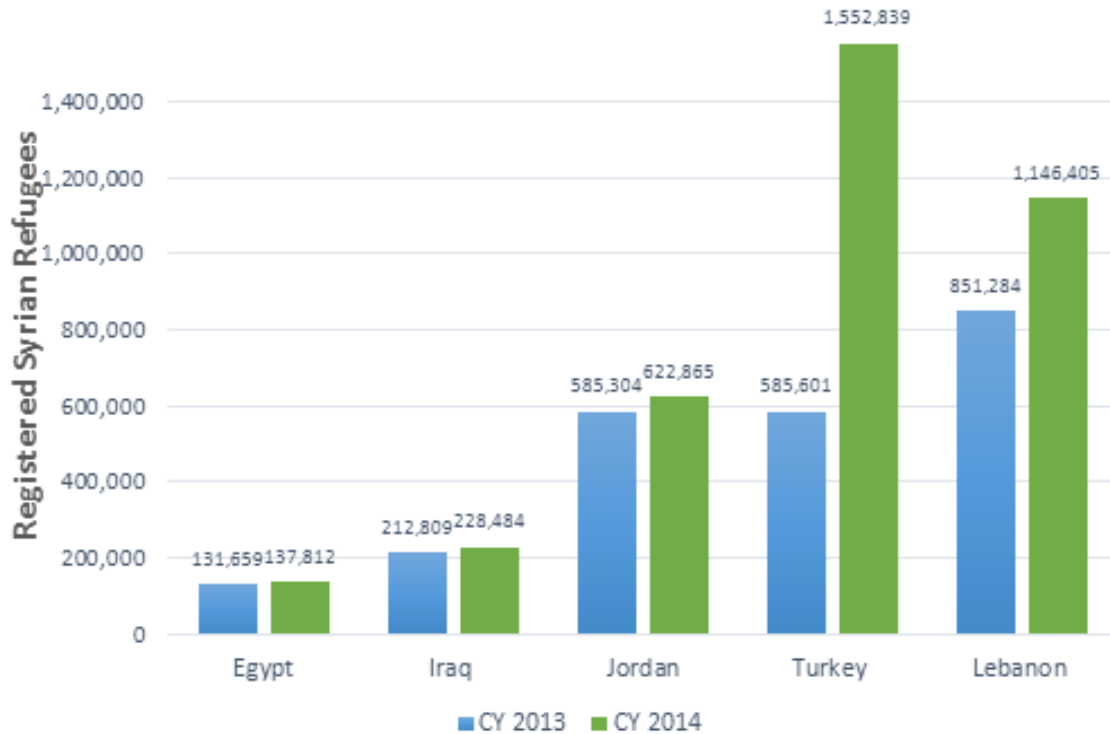
28 The regional Kurdistan government also scaled back its involvement in food distribution in refugee camps in 2013 (*ibid.*).

29 Around 95 percent of the registered Syrian refugee population resides in the Kurdistan region, an area laden with high numbers of internally displaced.

30 Before July 2013, Syrians were exempt from prior-to-arrival visa requirements. On arrival they received a tourist visa and were allowed to stay for three months, after which they were required to regularize their stay in the country.

The introduction of visa requirements has significantly limited access to the country (Ayoub and Khallaf 2014). Additionally, hostility toward Syrian refugees has increased, particularly following the government regime change in July 2013 (Ayoub and Khallaf 2014; Inter-Agency 2014c).

Figure 1. Syrian Refugees in Major Host Countries, CY 2013 and CY 2014



Source: UNHCR. 2014. Statistical Online Population Database, data extracted December 15. www.unhcr.org/statistics/populationdatabase; UNHCR 2015a.

IV. The International Community's Response

Providing Protection to Syrian Refugees

The number of Syrians seeking asylum outside the region has increased over the last three years, although it remains comparatively low. Around six percent of Syrians (239,700) who fled the country between 2011 and 2014 sought refuge in 44 industrialized states in Europe, North America, and the Asia Pacific region.³¹ The vast majority sought protection in Europe, with 222,225 Syrian asylum applications submitted in 37 European states

³¹ The estimated number of Syrians who sought asylum between 2011 and 2014 is based on statistics provided in UNHCR's annual asylum trends reports (see UNHCR 2013, 2014d, and 2015h). For a list of the 44 industrialized states see *supra* note 3.

between April 2011 and December 2014 (UNHCR 2015e).³² Even though Syrians, since 2013, have constituted the largest group of asylum seekers among the 44 industrialized countries covered by UNHCR's annual asylum trends reports, there remains a considerable disparity in the number of Syrians harbored in these countries compared to the millions of refugees taken in by Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey.

One avenue for the international community to help alleviate the burden on neighboring countries is through resettlement and other forms of admission.³³ As of January 9, 2015, 79,180 places had been offered for Syrian refugees by 26 different states (UNHCR 2015b).³⁴ This accounted for only two percent of the registered Syrian refugee population living in the *five* regional countries of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey—all of which face acute economic challenges, political instability, and significant security issues of their own. Several high income countries that have not offered resettlement include Japan, Kuwait, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Additionally, China and India have not offered any resettlement places.

A rough estimate of the total number of Syrians granted protection (including refugee resettlement, asylum, and temporary protection) in Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States, by the end of 2014, is 125,000.³⁵ This number is 3.4 percent of the total registered population in neighboring countries. The total number of Syrians granted protection by these four states is less than the 137,812 registered Syrians in Egypt alone, the regional state that hosted the fewest refugees at the end of 2014. In comparison to Turkey and Lebanon, the roughly 125,000 Syrians given protection accounted for only eight and eleven percent of the registered Syrian refugee population in each country respectively.

Financial Support

International support for the Syrian humanitarian situation has been largely financial. The European Union has led the international community in aid for the Syrian crisis (ECHO 2015). Collectively, the European Commission and its member states dedicated more than USD 3.5 billion, by January 2015, to humanitarian, development, economic, and stabilization assistance to internally displaced Syrians and to Syrian refugees and their host communities in Iraq, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt (ECHO 2015; European Commission 2015a).

32 The countries are the 28 member states of the EU, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

33 Other forms of admission schemes include humanitarian visas, private sponsorship, family reunification, scholarships, medical evacuation, and labor mobility programs (UNHCR 2015b).

34 The states are Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Uruguay (UNHCR 2015b).

35 This approximation is derived from the estimated resettlement places made available for Syrians by each country (as of December 31, 2014), plus the number of Syrians granted asylum by each country, and the number of Syrians who benefited from temporary protected status in the United States (as of January 2015). The asylum numbers for the European countries are from 2012 through 2014. The asylum numbers for the United States are from FY 2012 through FY 2014 (Note: the FY 2014 number for the United States is estimated based on the number asylum cases approved during this period, see text below).

The United States and United Kingdom are the top single-state bilateral donors in humanitarian aid for the Syrian crisis (Pierce 2014). The United States has committed by far the largest sum of humanitarian assistance to Syria and its neighbors, contributing USD 2.9 billion between FY 2012 and 2014 (USAID 2014; US PRM 2014, 3). More than USD 1.4 billion of this amount was allocated to assist refugees and host communities in the region (ibid). The United Kingdom, by February 2015, had committed USD 790 million in aid to those affected by the Syrian conflict (UK DFID 2015). Around USD 407 million was provided specifically to help Syrian refugees and host communities (ibid.). Sweden and Germany have likewise provided financial assistance. Germany donated USD 448 million in humanitarian aid for the Syrian crisis from 2012 through 2014, and Sweden contributed USD 169 million in humanitarian and other assistance from March 2011 through October 28, 2014 (German Federal Ministry of Interior 2014b; Sweden Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2014).

Considerable amounts of aid have also been given by Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Japan, and Canada. For instance, Kuwait was the third largest bilateral donor in 2014 (behind the United States and United Kingdom) for the Syrian Regional Refugee Response Plan, the UN's humanitarian program designed to assist Syrian refugees and vulnerable host communities (FTS 2015).³⁶ Germany was fourth followed by Saudi Arabia, Japan, and Canada (ibid.).³⁷

Despite donations from governments and private actors, resources to aid the humanitarian situation have been insufficient to address the needs of displaced Syrians. The amount of aid from states and institutions for the Syrian Regional Response Plan reached only 61 percent of the estimated USD 3.74 billion necessary to cover the needs for Syrian refugees and host communities in 2014 (UNHCR 2015a).³⁸ The shortfall had negative implications for many vulnerable Syrians.

For instance, in early December 2014 the UN World Food Programme (WFP) was forced to temporarily suspend food assistance to more than 1.7 million Syrian refugees due to inadequate funding resources (WFP 2014a). Though the WFP was able to resume its food assistance following a fundraising campaign, there was a two-week period where hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees went without the programs assistance (WFP 2014b). UNHCR also experienced a funding shortfall. It received only 63 percent of the budget required to cover needs for Syrian refugees during 2014, leaving many vulnerable Syrians without assistance (UNHCR 2015g).³⁹

36 The United States gave USD 823,421,815, the United Kingdom gave USD 159,471,731, and Kuwait gave USD 149,273,450.

37 Germany gave USD 131,190,965, Saudi Arabia gave USD 118,016,655, Japan gave USD 91,622,781, and Canada gave USD 80,069,477.

38 The 2014 Syria Regional Response Plan brings together more than 155 actors to respond to the needs caused by the Syrian conflict. The Syrian Regional Response Plan received 2.27 billion, or 61 percent of its budget, for 2014 (UNHCR 2015a).

39 This estimate is for UNHCR's work in the Syrian Regional Response Plan. The United States was the top donor to UNHCR for its 2014 Syrian Regional Response Plan budget (USD 303 million), followed by the EU (USD 149 million), Kuwait (USD 93 million), Germany (USD 42 million), and Japan (USD 35 million). The United Kingdom and Sweden contributed USD 24 million and USD 1 million, respectively (UNHCR 2015g).

V. Comparison between Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States

Resettled Syrian Refugees

The economic, social, and human cost of caring for refugees and the internally displaced is being borne mostly by poor communities, those who are least able to afford it. Enhanced international solidarity is a must if we want to avoid the risk of more and more vulnerable people being left without proper support.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres

(cited in UNHCR 2015d)

Refugee resettlement can serve as an important expression of international solidarity and responsibility sharing, and it provides international protection to meet the specific needs of vulnerable persons whose life, liberty, safety, health, or other fundamental rights are at risk in the country where they have sought refuge (UNHCR 2011). In the context of the Syrian conflict, refugee resettlement is an important option as it offers protection to especially vulnerable Syrians and can relieve some of the burden placed on the neighboring countries accommodating large numbers of Syrian refugees. UNHCR estimates that more than 10 percent of the 3.7 million registered Syrian refugees in the region are individuals who are “acutely vulnerable and need resettlement elsewhere” (Guterres 2014; UNHCR 2014c).⁴⁰

The number of Syrian refugees who have been resettled to states outside the region is very small in comparison to the refugees living in the region, and even smaller in comparison to those who have fled Syria but who have not been formally registered as refugees. Based on UNHCR’s refugee resettlement database, 2,576 Syrians referred by UNHCR were resettled to third countries from January 2012 through September 2014 (UNHCR 2015i). Out of this number, 60 percent, or 1,576 refugees, were resettled to Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States (ibid.). Germany resettled more than one-half of this population (941 Syrian refugees) while the United Kingdom only resettled two percent (34 Syrian refugees) (ibid.).⁴¹

Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States have each committed to admit additional Syrian refugees. In March 2013, Germany announced the initiation of a program for admitting Syrian refugees, primarily from Lebanon. Syrians admitted through this program receive a two-year temporary residence permit which can be extended consecutively (Miller and Orchard 2014, 58).⁴² Germany’s national government has vowed to receive 20,000 Syrian refugees through this program (German Federal Ministry of Interior 2014b). In addition to this commitment, 15 of Germany’s states have initiated their own sponsorship program, adding another 10,000 places for Syrian refugees in the country

40 Acutely vulnerable refugees include people who fall within the globally agreed resettlement criteria, such as survivors of torture, refugees with serious medical conditions, or women left alone with several children to care for and without family support (UNHCR 2014c).

41 Sweden and the United States resettled 468 and 136 Syrians respectively (UNHCR 2015i).

42 After seven years, foreign nationals are eligible to apply for permanent residence. See German Residence Act, section 26 (4).

(European Resettlement Network 2014). Sweden has also agreed to resettle more Syrian refugees; as of January 9, 2015, it had committed to 2,700 resettlement spots (UNHCR 2015b).⁴³

The United States has not specified the number of Syrian refugees it will admit.⁴⁴ However, evidence suggests that it will resettle a larger number than the 105 Syrians admitted in FY 2014 over the next several years (US PRM 2015). In December 2014, the assistant secretary for the US Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) announced that the United States plans to take the lead in resettling Syrian refugees worldwide (Richard 2014). She stated that the United States has been receiving roughly a thousand new UNHCR resettlement referrals from Syria each month and that, at the beginning of December 2014, it was in the process of reviewing 9,000 resettlement cases (ibid.). UNHCR had submitted 10,201 Syrian resettlement referrals to the United States, as of December 31, 2014 (UNHCR 2015b). PRM anticipates that US resettlement of Syrian refugees will dramatically increase in 2015 and beyond (Richard 2014; US PRM 2014, 55).⁴⁵

Like the United States, the United Kingdom has not committed to a specific number of resettlement places. Instead, it introduced a vulnerable persons relocation scheme in January 2014 for “particularly vulnerable” Syrians (UK Home Office 2014a). Syrians admitted through this program will be granted humanitarian protection status, which is an immigration status given to individuals who need protection but do not meet the refugee criteria defined in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol (European Database of Asylum Law 2015).⁴⁶ Humanitarian protection status allows temporary residency for five years. Following this period, individuals may apply for permanent settlement, known as “indefinite leave to remain” (UK Home Office 2013; UK Home Office 2014a). By the end of CY 2014, the UK had granted humanitarian protection to 143 Syrian refugees under this system (UK Home Office 2014b). Though the UK Home Office has not provided a quota for this program, it has indicated that it anticipates helping around several hundred Syrians over a three-year period (Bardens, Gower, and Smith 2014, 3).

At this rate, resettlement is unlikely to offer a substantial solution to the overburdened states hosting Syrian refugees or to the massive number of vulnerable Syrians living in them. Out of the four countries, Germany and the United States have provided the most resettlement places. As of January 9, 2015, these two countries made up one-half of all the resettlement and other forms of admission space offered for Syrian refugees by countries outside the region.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the roughly 40,201 places offered by Germany and the

43 Resettled refugees in Sweden receive a permanent residence permit (Government of Sweden 2014, 7)

44 Resettled refugees in the United States must apply to adjust to permanent residence status one year after their admission (Government of US 2014, 8)

45 For example, the PRM’s report on proposed refugee admissions for 2015 said the United States will welcome Syrians approved for resettlement “in larger numbers in 2015” (US PRM 2014). It also stated that it anticipates “the launch of significant processing of Syrians during FY 2015” (ibid.). From the start of FY 2015 through April 20, 2015, 651 Syrians were resettled to the United States (US PRM 2015).

46 Humanitarian protection status is the United Kingdom’s equivalent to subsidiary protection which is defined in EU Directive 2011/95/EU, article 2(g) (European Database of Asylum Law 2015).

47 According to UNHCR, states have pledged a total of 79,180 places for resettlement and other forms of humanitarian admission for Syrian refugees, as of January 9, 2015 (UNHCR 2015b).

United States pale in comparison to the 3.7 million registered refugees residing in Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, and Turkey.

Syrian Asylum Seekers and Refugees

Another avenue available for Syrians wishing to find refuge in states outside the region is to seek protection through asylum, a method Syrians have used at an increasing rate since 2012. The protracted nature of the conflict, the grim situation for refugees in neighboring countries, and the relatively small number of resettlement slots could be contributing factors to the rise in Syrian asylum claims made outside the region. Since 2012, Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States have all seen a significant growth in both the number of Syrian asylum applications received and the number of Syrians granted asylum.

Germany and Sweden, by far, received the greatest number of asylum applications by Syrian nationals out of the four states over a three-year period starting in 2012 (see Table 1). Between 2012 and 2014, Germany received 61,885 Syrian asylum claims and Sweden received 55,210 (*ibid.*). In relation to Germany and Sweden, the number of Syrians requesting asylum in the United Kingdom and the United States was modest. Between 2012 and 2014, 5,739 Syrians sought asylum in the United Kingdom (*ibid.*). The United States received the fewest requests over a three-year period, with an estimated 5,280 claims submitted by Syrians from FY 2012 through 2014 (*ibid.*).

All four states saw a substantial rise in the number of applications submitted since 2012. Germany received 41,100 Syrian asylum applications in 2014 alone, over three-fold the number filed in 2013 (12,855), and five times the number received in 2012 (7,930) (see Table 1). In Sweden, 30,750 Syrian asylum claims were made in 2014 (*ibid.*). This was a significant rise from the 16,540 claims submitted in 2013 and the 7,920 made in 2012 (*ibid.*).

In the United States, the number of Syrian asylum applications nearly tripled between FY 2012 and FY 2014, reflecting the same general trend experienced in Germany and Sweden. In FY 2012, 839 asylum applications were filed by Syrian nationals in the United States (USCIS 2014a; EOIR 2014).⁴⁸ This number rose to 2,074 in FY 2013 and to around 2,367 in FY 2014 (*ibid.*).⁴⁹ The United Kingdom also saw a rise in the number of Syrian asylum applications, receiving 1,289 in 2012 and 2,410 in 2014 (see Table 1).

Following the trend of asylum applications, all four states have increased grants of asylum to Syrians since 2012, although there was considerable variance in asylum grants to Syrians by state. Overall, Germany granted asylum to the largest number of Syrians (39,965) from 2012 through 2014, followed closely by Sweden (31,771) (see Table 1). In contrast, the United Kingdom granted asylum to only 3,548 Syrians during this period (*ibid.*). The

48 The estimated number of individuals is based on the number of new defensive asylum requests (176) plus the number of new affirmative cases (489) multiplied by 1.356.

49 FY 2013 is estimated based on new affirmative cases (1,335) multiplied by 1.356 plus new defensive asylum requests (264). The number of defensive claims had not been reported for FY 2014 at the time this paper was written. The FY 2014 estimate is based on new affirmative cases (1,582) multiplied by 1.356 plus the average number of defensive claims between FY 2012 and 2013 (222).

United States provided asylum to the fewest number of Syrians over a three-year period. From FY 2012 through FY 2014, the United States granted asylum to an estimated 1,986 Syrians (ibid.).

Though the United States granted asylum to the fewest Syrians out of the four states, it increased asylum grants to Syrians between FY 2012 and 2013. In FY 2013, 811 Syrians were granted asylum in the United States, more than double the 364 Syrians granted asylum in FY 2012 (Martin and Yankay 2014). The data for the number of asylum grants in FY 2014 was not published by the US Department of Homeland Security's Office of Immigration Statistics at the time this paper was written. However, based on the number of asylum applications submitted in FY 2014, it is estimated that the number of Syrians granted asylum in FY 2014 will be comparable to the number granted in FY 2013.

Table 1: Number of Syrian Asylum Applications and Syrians Granted Asylum, CY 2012 through 2014*

	CY 2012		CY 2013		CY 2014		CY 2012- 2014	
	Asylum Applications	Asylum Granted	Asylum Applications	Asylum Granted	Asylum Applications	Asylum Granted	Asylum Applications	Asylum Granted
Germany	7,930	7,460	12,855	8,700	41,100	23,805	61,885	39,965
Sweden	7,920	4,090	16,540	11,385	30,750	16,296	55,210	31,771
UK	1,289	900	2,040	1,450	2,410	1,198	5,739	3,548
US (FY)*	839	364	2,074	811	2,367	811**	5,280	1,986

Notes: *US numbers are based on its fiscal year (October 1 through September 30). **Estimate based on FY 2013 number (see text).

Sources: Bitoulas 2013, tables 5 and 8; Bitoulas 2014, tables 5 and 8; Bitoulas 2015, tables 5 and 8; EOIR 2014; Martin and Yankay 2014, table 7; UK Home Office 2014b; UNHCR 2013, 28; USCIS 2014.

Temporary Protection

Temporary protection is another possible means for providing protection to Syrians. Temporary protection provides beneficiaries with the legal right to be in a country, for a limited time, due to risk of serious harm in a person's home country (Miller and Orchard 2014).⁵⁰ At the end of 2014, temporary protection was available for Syrians in the United States but was not available at a regional level in Europe (USCIS 2015; Miller and Orchard 2014).⁵¹

In the United States, temporary protected status (TPS) allows individuals from a designated country to remain and to work for fixed, renewable periods.⁵² TPS can be granted to

50 EU Directive 2001/55/EC, article 2(a); US INA, section 244(b)(1)

51 Germany and the United Kingdom technically grant temporary protection for Syrians admitted through their resettlement programs. However, this is not discussed in this section because it was covered in the resettlement portion of the paper.

52 To qualify for temporary protected status the non-citizen must demonstrate that he or she has been continuously present in the United States since the effective date of the most recent designation of his or her country of origin for temporary protected status. See US INA, section 244(c).

nationals of the designated state (or individuals without nationality who habitually resided in the designated country) in which there is an armed conflict, a natural disaster, or other extraordinary and temporary conditions that prevent them from returning.⁵³ In 2014, 11 countries were designated for temporary protected status by the United States: El Salvador, Guinea, Haiti, Honduras, Liberia, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, and Syria (Ester, Seghetti, and Wasem 2015). Syria has been one of the designated countries since March 29, 2012 (USCIS 2015).⁵⁴ By January 2015, approximately 5,000 Syrians had been granted TPS, and an estimated additional 5,000 individuals were eligible to file applications for this status (USCIS 2015, 248).

In the EU, temporary protection generally refers to a procedure “to provide, in the event of a mass influx or imminent mass influx of displaced persons from third countries who are unable to return to their country of origin, immediate and temporary protection to such persons.”⁵⁵ It applies not only to persons already in Europe, but unlike TPS allows for the entry of displaced persons.⁵⁶ The EU has had a regional temporary protection mechanism since 2001.⁵⁷ One rationale behind the EU’s development of this regional mechanism was to promote solidarity and burden-sharing among EU states with respect to receiving large numbers of potential refugees at one time (ibid.). At the end of 2014, the EU had neither designated temporary protection for nationals from Syria nor activated the temporary protection mechanism for the nationals of any country since it was included in EU legislation in 2001 (Chatty and Orchard 2014; Miller and Orchard 2014).

Appraisal of Refugee Protection in Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and United States

To varying degrees, all four countries saw a progressive increase in the number of Syrians provided protection through asylum and resettlement (and TPS in the United States) since 2012. By the end of 2014, Germany had provided protection to the largest number of Syrians (approximately 67,000) out of the four countries, leading in both resettlement places and

53 US INA, section 244(b)(1)

54 On March 29, 2012, the US Secretary of Homeland Security designated Syria for temporary protected status based on extraordinary and temporary conditions within the country that prevented Syrian nationals, and those with no nationality who last habitually resided in Syria, from returning to it in safety (USCIS 2015, 246). On January 5, 2015, the US Department of Homeland Security announced an 18-month extension of the temporary protected status designation for Syria. The extension is effective from April 1, 2015 through September 30, 2016 (USCIS 2015).

55 EU Directive 2001/55/EC, article 2(a). The duration of temporary protection shall be one year. It may be extended automatically by two six-month periods for a maximum of one year (EU Directive 2001/55/EC, article 4(1)). Where reasons for temporary protection persist, the Council of the European Union may decide to extend that temporary protection up to one more year (ibid., article 4[2]). According to the EU directive, temporary protection should not displace asylum, but should be an intermediary, immediate measure of protection, and persons granted temporary protection should be able to apply for and be granted refugee or subsidiary status if eligible (ibid. paragraph 10 and article 19).

56 See EU Directive 2001/55/EC, article 2(d), temporary protection can apply to a spontaneous movement of a large number of people from a particular country or region or an assisted evacuation into Europe; and article 8(3), which says states should facilitate the entry of eligible persons into their territory.

57 EU Directive 2001/55/EC

individuals granted asylum.⁵⁸ Sweden came in second (approximately 34,500 Syrians), due largely to the high number of Syrians given asylum. Although the United States has indicated it will resettle more Syrian refugees compared to Sweden (and it also offers TPS), it has granted asylum to relatively few, placing it third in the level of protection provided (approximately 17,000 Syrians). Out of the four countries, the United Kingdom provided protection to the smallest number of Syrians (approx. 3,700) by the end of 2014.

The reasons for the difference in raw numbers among these states is complicated and difficult to determine. A range of factors could account for the variance, including political policies and objectives, refugee friendly reputations among asylum seekers, family ties, ease of access and location, and procedural constraints. Sweden, for instance, has a reputation among Syrian asylum seekers for being a “safe haven,” which could be a contributing factor in the high number of Syrian asylum seekers, and consequently the large number of Syrians granted asylum (Brennen 2013; Rothschild 2014).⁵⁹ On the other hand, the United States is geographically much further from Syria than its European counterparts, which may be one reason for the small number of individuals seeking asylum there.

At the same time, the United States has a policy that aims to take at least 50 percent of all refugees referred for resettlement by UNHCR worldwide, and indicates that it will resettle more Syrian refugees in the near future (US PRM 2014). In contrast, the British government does not appear to be inclined to offer a large number of resettlement slots. This could be due to its current policy objectives. The British government, under the leadership of Prime Minister David Cameron, has vowed to reduce net migration numbers, and resettling a large number of Syrian refugees could be perceived as contradictory to this goal (Watt and Mason 2014).

Gauging differences among these four states in terms of the number of Syrians provided protection refuge (i.e., through resettlement, asylum, and temporary protection) can be valuable in raising awareness about the degree of protection provided by each state relative to the others. It also sheds light on the level of burden sharing each state has contributed. This information can be used to apply pressure on other states to do more to aid in the Syrian refugee crisis. Germany and Sweden, for example, have provided notable protection space for Syrian refugees and represent positive models which can encourage other industrialized states throughout Europe, North America, and the Asia Pacific region to increase their efforts. Likewise, the United States and the United Kingdom stand as models in relation to the amount of single-state humanitarian aid provided to Syria and the regional countries hosting Syrian refugees.

Nonetheless, the responses of Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States are modest in relation to the contributions of neighboring countries to Syria. An estimated 125,000 Syrians have received protection in the four states by the end of 2014 compared to the 3.7 million registered Syrian refugees in the region, not to mention the Syrians

58 Estimates for the number of Syrians provided protection in each of the four states are based on the number of Syrians granted asylum and the number of resettlement places offered by the end of 2014. In the United States, the number of Syrians provided temporary protected status is also included.

59 On September 3, 2013, the Swedish Migration Board revised its policy on Syrian asylum applicants to ensure that Syrians given subsidiary protection status were awarded permanent residence permits instead of temporary residence permits (Miller and Orchard 2014, 40).

awaiting registration and de facto Syrian refugees. The relatively small numbers offered protection by these four states is of even greater concern given that Germany and Sweden have admitted the largest number of Syrians aside from countries in the region. This paints a bleak picture for the level of protection provided to Syrian refugees by industrialized states outside the region.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In general, industrialized countries outside the region have not contributed sufficiently toward alleviating the burden caused by the Syrian refugee influx. Even though there are important variances between industrialized states, and some states have provided commendable support, neighboring countries still shoulder the vast majority of the burden in terms of both financial impact and accommodation of the refugee population. It is difficult for Syrian refugees to attain protection outside of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. The small number of refugee resettlement and other forms of admission available leave asylum seeking as one of the only options for Syrians pursuing protection beyond the region. Traveling to a country of asylum can be extremely arduous and dangerous, and relatively few Syrians are able even to seek protection through asylum in Europe and North America due, in part, to the difficult journey, tightly controlled borders, and geographic location (IOM 2014).

The observations presented in this paper suggest two overarching recommendations to mitigate the burden placed on neighboring countries and three specific recommendations to facilitate Syrian refugees' access to protection in states outside the region. The overarching recommendations are:

Increase burden sharing by the international community as a whole. Collectively, the international community has failed to meet the demands of the Syrian refugee crisis. To alleviate the enormous strain placed on neighboring states, the international community ought to contribute more in financial and resettlement assistance.

Increase distribution of the burden between states. There is significant discrepancy in the level of burden sharing by industrialized states, and the level ought to be dispersed more evenly. Countries like Germany and Sweden have provided a relatively high level of protection to Syrians while many others, such as the United Kingdom, Australia, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates, have not offered much. Likewise, the United States has contributed a disproportionate share of financial support among industrialized states, and countries like France, Spain, and Russia have provided very little. If more states contribute, the burden will be more manageable for all.

Specific measures states should take to facilitate Syrian refugees' access to protection outside the region include:

- Increase refugee resettlement places for Syrian refugees, especially those who are acutely vulnerable.⁶⁰

60 That is, people who fall within the globally agreed resettlement criteria, including survivors of torture, refugees with serious medical conditions, or women left alone with several children to care for and without family support (UNHCR 2014c).

- Increase family reunification and other forms of admission for Syrians, such as humanitarian visas, private sponsorship, academic scholarships, labor mobility schemes, and medical evacuation.
- Allow Syrians the possibility to apply for protection in developed states through embassies in neighboring countries to Syria.

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